



Town of Warren, Rhode Island

Minutes of the Economic Development Board

The Town of Warren, RI Economic Development Board met at a Regular Meeting on March 21, 2011 at 6:00 p.m. at Town Hall, located at 514 Main Street. Board Members present included Sara Volino, Paula Silva, Karen Dionne, Spencer Morris, Brandt Heckert, Kate Dickson, and Joel Carey. Board members Darcy DaCosta and Priscilla Galligan were absent; ex officio member Caroline Wells was absent. Lisa Raiola, Waterman Brown, and Greg Speiss were present to discuss Hope and Main. Jill Culora and Lee Medeiros were in attendance as members of the Warren Arts subcommittee. Kristin MacDonald was present at the meeting to serve as Secretary to the EDB.

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m.

1. Review and Approval of Minutes from the Regular Meeting on February 28, 2011

The minutes from the regular meeting held on January 28, 2011 were reviewed by the members via email. Ms. Dionne made a motion to accept the minutes, the motion was seconded by Ms. Dickson, and all members were in favor.

A motion was made by Mr. Morris to amend the Agenda to include a discussion of the tax exemption policies in the town of Warren under the Review and Approval of the 2011 Work Plan, Mr. Cary seconded the motion, and all members were in favor.

2. Review and Approval of 2011 Work Plan

Ms. Dionne presented the Board with copies of the 2011 Work Plan. The Board reviewed each objective and edited the assigned action items for final approval by the Board. Board members took responsibility for the separate action items as the Board reviewed the Work Plan. The Board agreed to add a discussion to the April meeting agenda on Objective 1, Action 4, item C: "Re-submit 2009 study/presentation documenting sign clutter to Town Council" Ms. Dionne and Mr. Heckert said they would review the 2009 study for discussion at the next meeting.

Under Objective 3, Marketing Warren, the Board decided to remove Actions 1 and 4 because the items were better suited to the purview of Discover Warren. Board member Kate Dickson will serve as the liaison between the EDB and Discover Warren. The Board added an additional action item, "Support for Hope and Main" to this objective. The Board discussed Objective 5, "Initiate Speaker Program at EDB Meetings". Two suggestions for

possible speakers were Senator Sheldon Whitehouse and Randy Rosenbaum, Executive Director of the RI State Council on the Arts.

Mr. Morris stated that it would be worthwhile for the EDB to reexamine to review existing tax exemption programs to better understand how they are reflecting current business needs in the town of Warren. He discussed tax exemptions for agricultural programs in Warren. The Board agreed to add Objective 6: "Ensure current tax exemptions meet the current needs of the Town", to the 2011 Work Plan.

Mr. Heckert made a motion to approve the 2011 Work Plan as discussed, the motion was seconded by Ms. Dickson, and all members were in favor. Ms. Dionne will update the final version of the 2011-2012 Work Plan for submission to Town Council and will present the final version to the EDB at the next meeting.

3. Update on Hope and Main with Lisa Raiola

Ms. Raiola was present to discuss the progress with Hope and Main. She stated that her efforts have been dedicated to getting zoning approval for the project, now she would like to host an event for Hope and Main at the Main Street School to advertise the value of the property before going after the final funding for the project. Ms. Raiola discussed level of demand for the proposed kitchen incubator facility; over 70 businesses responded to the survey and several additional businesses have contacted her personally to inquire about the project. Ms. Raiola discussed the funding challenges for the Hope and Main project. Stating that potential funders will need to see real people are interested in the completion of the project, Ms. Raiola stressed the need to collateralize the demand for kitchen incubator facility as part of securing additional funding. Her overall goal in hosting an event would be to ask potential incubator clients to make a commitment to using the facility. Ms. Raiola requested the help of the Board in scheduling and planning this event.

Ms. Dickson made a motion to propose a work group to assist Ms. Raiola in the development of the event and to ask Town Council to support and sanction the event, Ms. Silva seconded the motion, and all members were in favor. Ms. Dickson, Ms. Dionne, and Ms. Volino agreed to participate in the workgroup to assist Ms. Raiola. Ms. Volino stated she would send a letter to Town Council regarding the event by the end of the week. Ms. Raiola, Mr. Brown, and Mr. Speiss left the meeting at this time.

4. Discussion and Action on recommendations to Town Council regarding predatory businesses

Ms. Volino suggested that the EDB be aware of the zoning ordinances in order to make recommendations in the future to Town Council regarding potential predatory businesses. The Board discussed signage standards and guidelines, as well as the lack of enforcement for signage violations.

5. Update on Discover Warren meeting

Ms. Dickson reported that the Discover Warren meeting was successful with a good turnout of merchants and artists. She said that the Discover Warren website would be ready in about four weeks and that the Discover Warren website will link with the Town of Warren website.

6. Update on Warren Arts

Jill Culora and Lee Medeiros were present to update the Board on the *Warren Arts Initiative*. They presented the Board with a written mission statement to define the goals of this work group. In summary, the goal of *Warren Arts Initiative* is to maintain a network of artists and to advise the EDB and Town Council on arts based initiatives in the community. Ms. Silva made a motion to approve the mission statement, Ms. Dickson seconded the motion, and all members were in favor.

7. Discussion regarding Town council concerns about EDB portion of Comprehensive Plan

On Thursday, April 14, 2011 there will be a meeting with Caroline Wells the Planning Board, and the EDB to review the economic development section of the Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Heckert reported that he met with Ms. Volino, Ms. Dionne, and Mr. Bolster to discuss items in the economic development that Town Council might take objection to, including historic zoning.

A motion was made to adjourn, the motion was seconded, and all members were in favor.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kristin M. MacDonald

*Minutes submitted by Kristin MacDonald
April 14, 2011*

